



BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS
OHIO ALLIANCE

Ohio Senate Finance Subcommittee on Workforce
Ohio Alliance of Boys & Girls Clubs
Aireeya Turnbow, Ohio's 2015 Youth of the Year
House Bill 64 Testimony
May 19, 2015

Chairman Beagle, Vice Chair Williams, and members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to address you today.

My name is Aireeya Turnbow and the Boys & Girls Club of Erie County has taught me that life is not about the test and trials that you go through but it is about how you get through those test and trials. Ever since I was a little girl I have been faced with hardships and trials; growing up without a father, with little money, and being around those who seemed like they had it all. It was hard. When I first started going to the Club I knew I had found something that I felt was missing in my life. I found a second home of acceptance, love, and just people who cared. I knew from the moment I walked through the doors that it was a place I wanted to stay in forever.

Every day after school I rushed out those front doors and darted on the Boys & Girls Club bus just waiting to arrive. As I grew older, life grew tougher, and my decisions became more valuable to my life. All my so called friends began acting in ways I did not wish to act in, so I snuck away from that crowd. The Club taught me that I can be who I want to be and do what I want to do without being a follower. I learned that through the Keystone Club where I obtained many leadership skills. In my life I have lost a sister to suicide, a brother to a car accident, a father to carelessness, and almost my mother to hopelessness. When my sister took her own life because of being bullied, the Club marched with me and my family to her grave site and let off balloons. That simple act warmed my heart. That showed me that they really care and that they didn't just talk about their mission they lived their mission. They lived their mission through me.

The staff and members of the Club helped me reach my full potential when I needed them the most. I almost gave up but they said no! Their love and support helped me get through the toughest times in my life. Because I have made it through my tests and trials I can now look back and say thank you. The Keystone Club has also allowed me to utilize my skills at school. I am the Treasurer of the senior class, the President of NHS, the Captain of the Varsity Cheer Team, and in the top ten graduating seniors of my class. The Healthy Lifestyle Club which I also joined has influenced me to be involved with track and with cheerleading. I am so glad that I have had the Boys & Girls Club to lean on. When I become Youth of the Year I plan to start an anti-bullying program to help reduce teen suicide. I know what it is like to lose someone due to bullying and nobody should have to go through that tragedy.

I want the youth of America to know that whatever they are going through they are not alone and that they can go to the Club in their community for love and support, as I did. Without the Boys & Girls Club of Erie County, I know I would not be where I am today. And I thank them for that.

Aireeya Turnbow

Ohio Boys & Girls Clubs 2015 Youth of the Year

The Boys and Girls Club of Erie County

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